

June 27, 2007

**Statement of Congressman Pete Stark
Supporting Interior and Environmental Funding**

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of strengthening environmental protections, preserving public lands, and confronting global warming.

In the past six years of Republican budgets, our National Parks, forests, and wildlife refuges were recklessly neglected. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the main entity responsible for enforcing environmental laws, was left scrambling for funding. Nonetheless, President Bush suggested another big cut in his budget request. Fortunately for the millions of people who enjoy our public lands and who rely on the EPA to protect our air and water, the new Democratic Congress is committed to reversing years of dereliction. Instead, we are making overdue investments in environmental protections.

The Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 2643) provides for modest, but crucial, funding increases in a number of areas including:

- \$437 million above the President's request for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund that will allow approximately 150 communities to modernize their drinking water and wastewater infrastructure;
- \$200 million more than 2007 levels for the National Park Service to end a decade of declines in staffing, visitor services, and maintenance;
- \$900 million more than the President proposed for EPA enforcement and scientific research.

This bill protects coastal ecosystems and communities by maintaining the longstanding moratoria on oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf. This restriction protects the California coastlines that my constituents and I hold dear

Finally, after years of denials and stonewalling by Republicans, this bill recognizes that climate change is a reality and requires us to act. It would create a Commission on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation to make recommendations on how to best respond to climate change. This long overdue step will allow us to begin to address the many challenges that global warming presents.

President Bush has issued a veto threat and called this bill “irresponsible and excessive.” What is truly “irresponsible” is wasting billions of dollars on a fraudulent war while ignoring global warming and failing to protect the environment and the public health. This bill begins to alter the dangerous environmental course that the President and the Republicans have led us down the last six years. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes.